WOMEN AS INVENTORS.

PATENTS FOR ALL SORTS OF ODD THINGS BY THE GENTLE SEX.

Ploughs, Beehives, Axles, Rafts, Sleep-Inducers, Nose Improvers, Skirt Supporters and Many Other Articles of Feminine Use.

Significant of the times is the fact that woman is rapidly coming to the front as an inventor. Women are not only filing thousands of applications for patents on improvements in articles especially adapted and intended for their sex, but they are exercising their ingenuity in the direction of improving many of the implements with which men only as a rule are supposed to deal.

The model room of the patent office in Washington, says the New York World, bears witness to the fact that the inventive genius of the fair sex, while perhaps not so prolific as man's, has certainly accomplished remarkable results.

The first invention in this country by a woman was in 1809 and perfected on May 5 of that year. It was a device for straw weaving with silk or thread. The name of the inventor was Mary Kies. The next invention by a woman was in July, 1815. This was a corset perfected by Mary Brush. Then came a number of years with only an occasional invention.

Lavinia H. Foy, of Worcester, Mass., was one of the early woman patentees, and she has applied for patents on a great many improvements. Her first patent was issued on July 22, 1862, for an improvement in corset-skirt supporters, and nearly all the patents granted her have been for articles connected with the wearing apparel of women. In fact, nearly all of the early patents by woman were for improvements on articles connected with her surroundings or apparel, such as cooking utensils, picture frames, articles of dress and things useful and ornamental about the house.

A Philadelphia woman, however, started the ball rolling in the other direction by patenting an improvement in beehives, and about the same time another woman from the same city invented a mode of preventing the heating of journals or axles on cars. Still another from the Quaker City patented a railroad car heater.

Not to be outdone in the race a California woman invented a dumping wagon and an improvement in desulphuring ores. A Georgia woman patented a plough, and was followed with a similar device by a sister inventor in Illinois. More watchful over the comforts of man, however, was some fair Philadelphian, who made application for a patent on a "mustache spoon," and she received her patent, too.

An Ohio woman patented a car-coupler. About this time, from among the snowy Alps in far-off Switzerland came an application from a woman for an American patent on an improvement in stem-winding watches. The women of the Quaker City, however, still continued to lead, and one of them patented a liferaft and another a fire escape; from Pittsburg came an application for a car wheel.

A woman in England made application for a patent in this country for an improved method of constructing screw propellers. A Chicago woman patented a process of concentrating ores, and another from the same city invented a tug for harness, while a damsel of Buffalo patented an ozone machine. A New York woman invented a dicebox, and a Washington woman a pyrotechnic night signal. A Washington woman patented a street car awning.

Some years ago the wife of a Western man who was a general in the Union army during the civil war dreamed of a lock somewhat different from any in use at that time. She awoke in the night, got up, and taking a cake of toilet soap and a paper cutter, fashioned the lock as she had dreamed it was constructed. The next day she took it to a machinist, who formed a model from the one she had made of the cake of soap, and it was such an improvement on the locks of that time that a large firm offered a good royalty, from which she derives a fair income to this day.

An application was once made by a woman for a patent on "artificial dimples." It was rejected, however, by the commissioner of the patent office, so that any of the fair sex who now desire to experiment can do so without fear of infringement. Her claims were as follows:

"Smear a small spot on the cheek or chin with colorless shellac varnish mixed with glue. With a pencil or penholder press the flesh with the paint, holding it there until the substance on the face becomes dry and hard. The stiffened indentation thus retains the exact shape of a dimple, and a little face powder carefully dusted over the 'artificial dimple' will completely conceal the varnish and glue compound.

"Some care must be observed in smiling too suddenly, or the dimple may be broken. But with ordinary, gentle usage it will retain its pretty shape a whole evening, if not longer. While the dimple process is applicable to those whose faces comprise a soft, velvety or plump surface, as then a very deceptive dimple can be produced, it is not so available for thin or bony faces, nor where the skin is very thick and unyielding."

Another interesting and amusing invention by a woman was a crimping pin which could be used as a paper-cutter, skirt-supporter, paper file, child's pin, bouquet holder, shawl fastener and bookmark.

On March 10, 1885, a New York woman patented a device for inducing sleep. A description would be too lengthy to be given here in full, but the device consisted of a collar-like band of rubber, partly encircling the neck, and was fashioned so as to control the flow of blood to and from the head by limited pressure on certain veins and arteries.

In 1881 a patent was issued to a Boston woman on two somewhat novel devices. One of them was for restoring facial symmetry, and consisted of a spring plate with a head and two prongs or forks. The head was to be attached to the teeth and by placing the prongs inside the mouth so that they would press outward against each cheek, caused the cheeks in time to look plump and full. The other was a finger compressor made of two longitudinal conclave planes hinged together at one end by spring hinges, and thus adapted to fit the tips of the fingers, while the constant pressure reduced the size.

One of the inventions by the fair sex that is supposed to be conducive of beauty is a nose improver. It consists of a metal shell of the exact size of the nose desired. The nose is well bathed and then greased with olive oil or glycerine until perfectly soft. The improver is then attached and well fastened. The wearer then goes to bed. In the morning the improver is to be taken off and the nose bathed in warm water. It will probably cause some soreness, but a few applications are said to relieve the pain. In this way, it is claimed by the inventor, any nose may be changed to suit, the theory being that the nose is only a piece of cartilage and easy to change its shape.

AN OPAL RING.

That Brought Death to Every Man Who Wore It.

Among a certain class it is very doubtful whether the superstition regarding the opal can ever be removed. There are persons who are associated with the drama. If they are told that there is no harm in the opal, but only beauty, and a joy to its possessor, they are apt to reply: "Did you ever hear of Dan Bryant's opal?"

This gem was a large and very beautiful stone. The coruscations of rainbow hues which it emitted were exquisite. Where it first came from tradition does not say, but it went into the possession of Dan Bryant, who was at one time the most successful and popular of negro minstrels. He wore it in a setting just large enough to go over one of his little fingers, and he was very proud to show it. One day somebody said to him: "Dan, you should take that opal and throw it into the Hudson. It will either bring you ill-luck or it will kill you." Bryant laughed and said: "Some robber might kill me for it, but it could not kill me in any other way."

Within a week Bryant was taken suddenly ill with pneumonia, and three days later he was dead. Before he died he gave the ring to a friend and fellow minstrel, Neise Seymour. That actor was very proud of the memento and wore it for a time, not knowing that it was esteemed of evil influence. He, too, was taken ill suddenly and died. Then Wambold, the sweet singer of the California Minstrels, got the ring, and by purchase. He was taken down within a week with hemorrhages and he heard of the fate which had befallen both Seymour and Bryant soon after each of them became owners of the ring.

Therefore he gave it away, and to the day of his death he always believed that act saved his life. Then the next owner was Sherwood Coan, or as he was better known in the minstrel and operatic world, "Campbell." He was a strong, hearty and apparently healthy man, but he had not worn that ring very long before he, too, was taken ill and died. A friend of Campbell, who knew of what unhappy associations this ring was, took it from Campbell's finger, and calling in some of the associates of the dead singer to him, he said: "That ring shall curse no other man," and he placed it upon a stone and crushed it with the heel of his boot. It was said to have been worth $1,500, but no man who saw that act of destruction thought that there was waste when the gem was pulverized to powder.—Philadelphia Record.

FELIX LOVES THE VIOLIN.

Master Weir, a Colored Boy, Who Astonishes His Hearers.

Director James Johnson, of the Standard Musical college, Chicago, has among his violin pupils a little boy, Felix Weir, who is a musical prodigy, so remarkably gifted that experts declare that he is to become a master violinist.

Felix is a beautiful child, 11 years old. He has a splendid head, a well-formed body and a pair of chubby legs. His eyes are large and brown and his hair is brown and wavy. His mouth is like a girl's and his cheeks are just dark enough to suggest the negro blood that courses through his veins. He is a Chicago boy, born at 2807 Dearborn street, and has lived here all his life. Less than a year ago he did not know a note of music. Now he is displaying such a versatile richness of musical gifts and intelligent mastery of the violin that all who hear him pronounce him a phenomenon.

When a News reporter called at the college on Thirteenth street to-day, Felix was rehearsing some of his old lessons before some gentlemen who had heard of him, and his teacher, Mr. Johnson. And after he had played from memory such pieces as "Lander," by Carl Bohm; "Fantasie Pastoral" and "Robert le Diable" by Singlee, and "Sweet Spirit, Hear My Prayer," by request of one of the visitors, he was handed a newly published sheet of music by one of the visiting gentlemen and asked if he could play it. It was hard music, and Felix had never seen it before, but he played it at sight, and then, as if not satisfied with the performance, returned it to its owner, and, taking up his violin again, gave an absolutely pure and sympathetic rendering of the entire composition from memory, while his teacher played the accompaniment on the piano.

Then Felix went into the next room and began to gather up his music, preparatory to going home. The visitors were still chatting with Mr. Johnson about the boy, and one of them spoke of a little white girl, about whom he had read in a Chicago paper, who possessed what musicians termed the "gift of absolute pitch." That is, she could turn her back to a piano and name any note that is struck upon the instrument. The visitors asked if Felix could do the same thing. Mr. Johnson had never tried the experiment and replied that he didn't know what his pupil could do, but said he would try Felix, "just for fun." The child was still in the next room, but the folding doors that led into it were open.

"Listen, Felix," said Teacher Johnson as he struck the piano keys, "what notes did I strike?"

"You struck E flat, G natural, A flat and B flat, second octave in the treble," responded Felix, without raising his head. Then the teacher struck the instrument with both hands and again requested the little prodigy to name the notes, which he did without hesitation, and in ten minutes of similar experimenting proved, to the astonishment of all, that he, too, possessed the gift of absolute pitch.

Felix comes of a talented family. His eldest brother, 15 years old, is a young artist and two years ago won a prize in the Art Institute. There are five children in the family, all boys but one, and Felix is the third child. As long ago as he can remember, Felix says, he longed to play the violin. But his parents thought it was only a fancy and did not encourage him until their eyes were opened by one of the child's uncles, who took Felix to Mr. Johnson and paid for his first term of lessons on the violin.

ONE OF OUR LOSSES.

Background Women Are Being Crowded Out of Existence.

With the march of time we discover that for every gain in the world's history there is a corresponding measure of loss, for every fine thing that is daily originated some other equally fine thing is permitted to pass away. In gaining the new woman, the advanced woman, the educated woman, and the self-supporting woman, we lose one great, one noble element of the last century—the background woman. She is rapidly becoming extinct, extinct as the mammoth, the dodo, or the ichthyosaurus. Wherever now she may be seen, she must be glass-shaded, viewed from a distance with wonder and curiosity, for she can no longer be a background woman, but an elevated and exceptional specimen of a rare species, says the Gentle Woman. Fifty years ago the world teemed with the like of her; to-day there are only gaps to mark the places where once she reigned.

The background woman had usually some romantic unspoken history to which her mind was concentrated; her activities and the steady work of her hands betrayed nothing of the buried mood. Her disappointments merely caused a larger storage of the milk of human kindness in her breast, which she dispensed in a task of universal auntdom to the rising generation. Was there an invalided friend or relative requiring her, she was there with ministering touch and unflagging self-forgetfulness; did nurseries overflow beyond control of jaded mothers, whose domestic affairs were at sixes and sevens for want of guiding hands, she came to the rescue, upreared and managing, without parade wheeling the disorganized crew into line, and setting things straight with gentle suavity and unerring tact.

Sometimes the background woman was a maiden aunt, sometimes a sister, occasionally a sister-in-law, a cousin or a niece. She had voluntarily closed the volume of life's romance, and unostentatiously adopted spinsterhood and unselfishness. When her abilities were not sound she was not seldom to be seen at the right hand of the breadwinner, labelling, correcting, revising, and generally relieving him of business worries in the house. If she were of weaker mold her care was the store room and the linen press. She darned her dreams into gaping schoolboy socks, and sweetened with the lavender and rose of her faded passion the petty avocations of everyday existence. Sometimes she was sufficiently instructed to impart Latin and music, to preside among the olive branches and weld together good principles and sound knowledge as a basis for subsequent school education. Wherever she went the aroma of her delicate impersonality pervaded like the untraced breath of field flowers in country air, soothed, invigorated and influenced. Beneath the roof tree which sheltered her lay the scene of her devotions, which she dispensed without wage or reward, accepting the family ambitions and the family limitations as her own.

Progress has changed all this; the sublime spinster is dead, and in her place reigns the petticoated bachelor or the agitating femme seule. The motto of to-day is: "Every woman for herself, and God for all." The tending of the sick, the guidance of nursery and household have now become ill-paid professions instead of being, as once they were, labors of love, noble ministrations of attached souls, who, deprived of their natural bent—matrimony—diffused the exquisite extincts of a higher maternity throughout the toil and moil of the struggling race.